

# Lawyer sends complaint to Lumbee officials on Hoke repairs

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS  
Staff writer

A Fayetteville law firm has sent a letter of complaint to Lumbee Tribal Government administrator Leon Jacobs, complaining of substandard repairs allegedly completed on homes of seven tribal members in Hoke and Robeson counties, according to Donnie Jones, a Hoke home repair contractor.

Jones released a copy of the letter to news media yesterday that was mailed to key members of the Lumbee Tribe on Monday. Jones and wife Cathy, his sister-in-law Shirley Bullard, Ruth McMillan, Helen Locklear, and Hoke residents Robert Bullard Jr. and Dorothy Locklear hired Thorp, Clarke & Neville law firm in Fayetteville to represent them.

Based on the allegations voiced by the seven primarily senior citizens, the law firm urged the Lumbee Tribe to help resolve problems encountered by some of these property owners after their homes were renovated. The seven charged discrimination in an application, favoritism shown to contractors not qualified to complete repairs, plumbing backing up, a house fire caused by substandard work, and electrical wiring problems.

"My clients desire to settle this situation with the Lumbee Tribe and the Housing Department in a manner that does not bring further public attention to the Lumbee Tribe," J. Thomas Neville wrote. "It is their desire to reach an amicable solution."

Jacobs said none of the complainants had ever formally filed a complaint with the Lumbee's grievance committee, a protocol under the tribal policy. Jacobs said they have assisted many Hoke residents. There exists a current backlog of 2,000 applicants — some applying as long as four years ago — to receive renovations from the popular home repair and emergency assistance housing programs.

"Mrs. Bullard last indicated to us that she loved her house," Jacobs said of two-time renovation projects to satisfy Bullard. "We basically gave her a new house."

Jacobs said the allegations are untrue after he was told about some of the contents contained in the letter. As of yesterday, Jacobs said he had still not received the letter from Neville.

"I am not obligated to answer an attorney," Jacobs said. "I will respond to tribal members, but none have contacted me at this time."

"We have been cordial and fair, helping people in Hoke just like anyone else we would in our tribe."

During the last two years, the U.S. Housing and Urban Development agency conducted some inquiries concerning Lumbee housing practices, freezing some of the annual funds temporarily. Jacobs said the tribe is currently in good standing with HUD and no funds have been withheld for 2005. Some of the tribal housing fund was cut because of Congress "tightening its fiscal belt" last year, he added. Funds dispensed to Lumbee housing efforts run one year behind after they are dispensed by the federal government.

"We have resolved all our issues with HUD," Jacobs said. "We have accountability and are moving forward in our housing program."

Neville, on behalf of his clients, alleged the Lumbee officials were giving "preferential contract awarding" to contractors that were not based on the lowest bid or the "quality of work."

"These individuals (allegedly) benefited financially as fellow Lumbee tribal members were systematically exploited and left, in many cases, to live in substandard housing," Neville wrote. "The Housing Department (Lumbee's) has a fiduciary relationship with the homeowners in that the members of the Housing Department occupy a relationship of special trust and confidence."

"Therefore, a false representation is a breach of their fiduciary duty of utmost loyalty to the tribal homeowners..."

Neville detailed to Jacobs in his letter that after a Lumbee-hired contractor performed McMillan's home, it "caught on fire" in 2004. A nail that was driven into an electrical wire located in the attic was the cause of the blaze, Neville wrote of McMillan's allegation.

"The Housing Department (Lumbee's) refused to pursue the matter any further and informed Ms. McMillan, an elderly lady, she should have the fire department to burn her house down," Neville wrote. "The Housing Department stated that the fire was caused by Ms. McMillan's stove. However, Ms. McMillan (said she) did not have a stove in her house at the time of the fire."

Bullard said via the telephone yesterday that she has gone through two rehabilitations on her home by the Lumbee housing program, which is funded by HUD. She said her home still has not passed county inspections because of repeated violations on repair work by the tribe. She alleged her front porch is on the verge of "falling off" and plumbing repairs are "inferior" that cause her washing machine water to back up into her toilet or vice versa.

After numerous complaints, she said the tribal-hired contractors did correctly install an electrical circuit breaker box in her home that was creating a fire hazard when she complained to Hoke commissioners. This, after county commissioners Charles V. Daniels and James Leach visited Bullard's home along with other commissioners, Linda Revels, former Hoke planner and current clerk to the board, County Manager Mike Wood, and a representative from Congressman Robin Hayes' office. They previously met with Jacobs at Bullard's modest home to resolve some issues.

Mrs. Jones said her home is in "bad shape" after undergoing repairs from the Lumbee Tribe's housing program. She said her new kitchen floor that was laid with plywood is flipping up because it is unsecured properly and other substandard repairs such as leaking windows are causing problems.

"I think these contractors may not know what they are doing," Mrs. Jones said. "How many times do they have to do it to get it right?"

Her husband, Donnie Jones, said he was the lowest bidder on numerous contracts for the Lumbee housing program that were awarded to other contractors. Thorpe, Clarke & Neville also addressed his concerns in the letter sent to the tribe.

"I think the tribe retaliated against me because I had helped my sister-in-law Shirley out to try and get her home repaired properly," Jones said.

"I do not care how far we have to take this matter," Shirley Bullard said. "We are going to get satisfaction and not be treated like second-class citizens or tribal members."

# Thomas

(Continued from page 1A)

deal with people. Sometimes you have to go also by what your heart tells you," he said.

"There is no excuse for breaking the law, but you have to bend a little bit and sympathize with people."

A native of Scotland County and resident of Hillcrest, Thomas was appointed by Raeford Police Chief Kevin Locklear as assistant police chief in May 2004. From his position as sergeant in major crimes and drug investigations, Thomas was designated as major by the Raeford Police Department. He has held his second-in-command position for almost one-and-a-half years.

"We have come through the ranks together, and I want to commend Major Thomas because he has really worked hard to contribute to this department," Locklear said. "He has been a real valuable asset to us. He has always been dedicated. Even though we open at eight o'clock in the morning, he has always arrived at six-thirty."

"I think he has earned his retirement, and it is well deserved. However, we are losing a great officer."

Locklear indicated he has no immediate plans to conduct a search for a replacement for Thomas.

Thomas said he would also miss the daily rapport with Locklear and the rest of the staff.

"Chief Locklear is running the police department the way it should be run and according to the North Carolina law," Thomas said. "Head I grew up in the Raeford Police Department along with the late chief James Murdock and the late chief Zeke Wiggins."

"They inspired us. We put a lot of their ideas and instructions into what we implemented later on to improve the department."

Thomas especially thanked Locklear and retired Raeford city manager Mike McNeill for giving him the chance to succeed as assistant police chief.

"I thank them for having the faith and trust in me and for believing in my abilities," Thomas said. "A lot of people in this town have helped me over the years."

Thomas remembered one bitterly cold Christmas Day when he was on duty at a street corner. Raeford resident Bobby Carter brought him ham biscuits for breakfast because nothing was open on the holiday, a tradition Carter continued for years.

"Those things you do not forget, and you always appreciate it," Thomas said.

Thomas also recalled a close call when he responded to a riot at a local juke joint to provide mutual aid to the Hoke Sheriff's Office.

"We were shot at through the back-side glass of my patrol car," Thomas said. "Dodging that bullet, I always was grateful that it missed us."

Thomas will continue to supervise budgetary issues, equipment and personnel needs until he retires the first of the year. He will later volunteer as a member of the Raeford Po-

lice Department auxiliary force if requested by Locklear.

Formerly a resident of Laurinburg, Thomas, 58, rose through the ranks from police officer to sergeant in less than one year after being hired by Wiggins in 1987. Thomas was promoted to his former investigative position in 1997.

Prior to his tenure in Hoke, Thomas served as lieutenant/chief jailer with the Scotland County Sheriff's Department between 1979-1986. He served under the administration of former sheriff Alfred White where he was first hired as a deputy.

A decorated military veteran of the Vietnam War, Thomas left the service to accept a position as a police officer with the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington D.C.

Thomas remembered the inaugural ceremony of the late president John F. Kennedy.

"Back in the '60s, President Kennedy's speech always stuck in my mind," Thomas, paraphrasing it, said. "Some people see things as they are and ask why, and dream of things that could be and ask why not."

"That has always been my philosophy."

Thomas was also on duty as a police officer in the nation's capitol during some major tragedies.

"I was there when Martin Luther King was assassinated and when Bobby Kennedy was killed," Thomas said. "It was tough at that time."

"I worked in downtown Washington at the headquarters because of the riots that ensued after Dr. King's death."

"I also remember standing on parade in dress uniform for 11 hours at the funeral of Bobby Kennedy."

Thomas returned to Laurinburg in 1987.

"The most important thing I will miss about police work is the challenging aspects of it," he said. "I like solving cases and bringing people to justice to answer for the crimes they committed."

Among the many people Thomas thanked for their friendship and support are Locklear, Murdock, Wiggins, Captain John Pierce of the Hoke Sheriff's Office, a former Raeford police detective, District Attorney Kristy Newton and DA special investigator John Joseph, retired DA Jean Powell and the Rev. Bishop Oscar



From left, retiring Raeford Assistant Chief Greg Thomas and Chief Kevin Locklear.

Cunningham. "I also want to express my gratitude to all the court personnel and law enforcement I have worked with over the years," Thomas said. "Thomas is a member of the N.C. Police Executive Association. He is also affiliated with the Robeson County Law Enforcement Executive Association. Thomas is a member of the Word

Of Life Church where Cunningham officiates. Thomas serves on the Praise and Worship Team and also sings in the Adult Choir and the Men's Choir. Thomas is married to Glendora Thomas. He has three children from a previous marriage. Daughter Vanessa Thomas resides in Laurinburg. His sons, the Rev. Gregory Thomas Jr. and Reginald Thomas, both live in Tennessee.

**Financial Strength Through North Carolina People**

**FARM BUREAU INSURANCE**

Kathy Brewer, Roger Pickler, James E. McMillan III, AUI, Rick Sandy, LUCI, Elaine Johnson

**Auto • Home • Life**

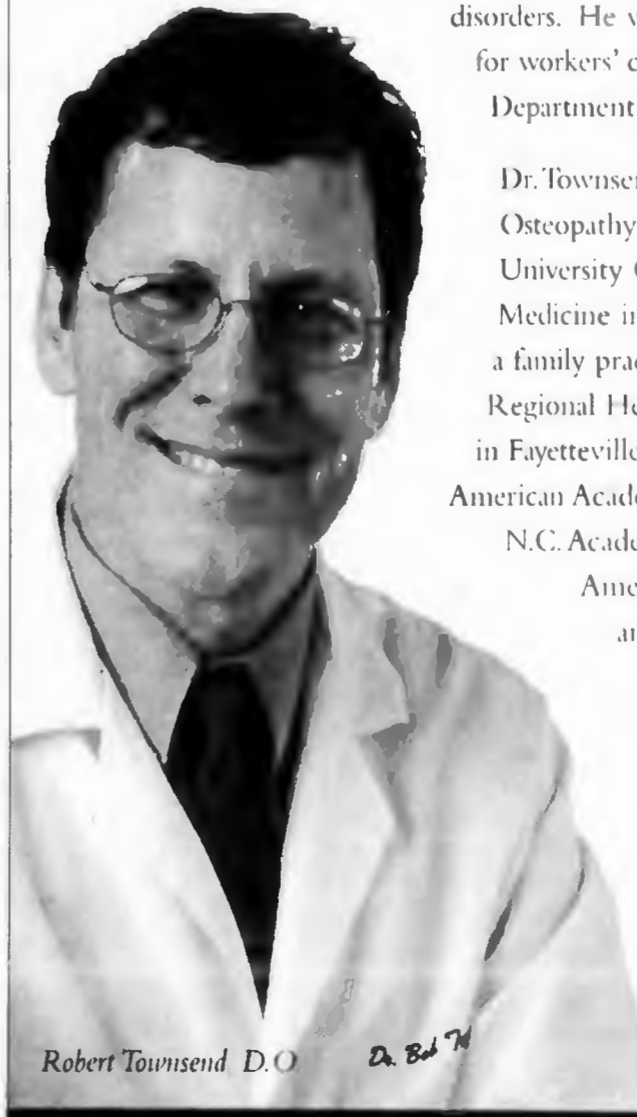
**Hoke County Farm Bureau**  
520 Harris Ave. • Raeford  
875-4091

## Now Accepting Appointments at the FirstHealth Family Care Center - Raeford

Robert Townsend, D.O., has fulfilled one of his dreams. He has returned to his hometown to practice medicine at the FirstHealth Family Care Center in Raeford. Much like his father, Dr. Robert Townsend Jr. who practiced in Raeford for many years, Dr. Robert Townsend III has always felt a calling to small-town medicine.

In addition to general family medicine from birth to adulthood, Dr. Townsend will offer some specialized services, including treatment for men's medical issues, diabetes care, hypertension and dermatologic disorders. He will also provide medical care for workers' compensation claims and offer Department of Transportation physicals.

Dr. Townsend received his Doctor of Osteopathy from Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Davie, Fla., and completed a family practice residency at Southern Regional Health Education Consortium in Fayetteville. He is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the N.C. Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Osteopathy and the N.C. Medical Society.



Robert Townsend, D.O. Dr. B. Townsend

**FirstHealth**  
FAMILY CARE CENTER  
RAEFORD

Monday to Friday  
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

To make an appointment, please call (910) 904-2350

www.firsthealth.org

313 TEAL DRIVE • RAEFORD, NC 28176 • (910) 904-2350

**FREE FREE FREE**

Dish Network  
Satellite TV System  
FREE up to 4 Rooms  
Hooked Up  
FREE Installation  
Plus FREE DVR (Digital Video Recorder)

CALL NOW FOR YOUR FREE SYSTEM  
**910-875-7381**

Service Calls For Dish Network and Direct TV  
7 Days A Week 8 am - 8 pm  
7 Years Experience



## Red Springs Auto Sales

ON LOT FINANCING  
NO CREDIT CHECK

Buy \* Sell \* Trade

Many  
Quality  
Handpicked  
Vehicles  
To Choose  
From



Stop By The Lot Today!  
See Billy Monroe, Glenn McInnis, Raul Gomey,  
Fabian Mumgia, Mickey Richardson or Linda Garrett  
23 East Fourth Avenue (Highway) 211 East \* Red Springs, N.C.  
Telephone (910) 843-1301

